1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

241 The Highland is evidently well suited to the particular type of
221 agriculture which the Ovimbundu carry on with upland fields for the principal crops of maize and beans growing in the rainy season and with river gardens for secondary cultures in the dry season. The purpose of the latter is to piece out between the principal harvests. The situation of the Highland across principal watersheds and therefore on convenient trade routes has been noted. This is doubtless one factor in commercial development among the
231 Ovimbundu. Cattle-keeping with them seems to be largely a commercial development. While cattle may live on the Highland, they thrive better in the less well-watered lands to the west and the south where the neighbouring peoples are cattle-keepers.

Neighbouring peoples

101 The cattle-keeping peoples who live just west and south of the
197 Ovimbundu are the Nganda, the Ndombe, the Hanya, the Cilenge, the Cipungu, the Muila, the Nyaneka, the Mulondo, and the Khumbi.[1] These peoples all seem to be related to each other and in some way to some, at least, of the Ovimbundu.[2] Still further south beyond these peoples are the Ambo and the Herero, also cattle-keepers. All these, together with the Ovimbundu, have been classified linguistically as making up the 'Western Province' of the Southern Bantu.[3] There are also a few Bushmen on the southern borders.

The peoples to the east and south-east of the Umbundu country are probably Lunda emigrants and so belong to the Congo group (Cokue and Songo) and to the Zambezi or Central group (Luimbi, Lucazi, Nyemba, Ngonzelo, &c.).[4] These people are lumped together by the Ovimbundu under the somewhat deprecatory term of ea *Ngangela*.

The northern neighbours belong to the Western or Angola 'cluster' of the Congo group (Esela, Cipala, Lupolo, Ndongo or

[1] See C. Estermann, 'Notas Etnográficas sôbre os povos indígenas do Distrito da Huíla' (*Boletim Geral das Colónias*, Fev. 1935, pp. 41–69). He groups some of these people together under the name 'Bangala' or 'Ovambangala'.

[2] Information from Nganda, Mulondo, Cilenge, and Ovimbundu individuals.

[3] See R. A. Dart, 'Racial Origins', p. 23, in Schapera, op. cit., 1937; C. M. Doke, *Bantu Linguistic Terminology* (London: Longmans, 1935); Sir H. H. Johnston, *Comparative Vocabulary of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919, 1922).

[4] Johnston, op. cit.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Olungunga is not a sweet manioc, so is not eaten raw. The roots are placed to soak in a stream for three or four days before they are roasted on a fire, after which they may be eaten with impunity. As an alternative the roots may be dried in the sun; they are then pounded into meal which is scattered into boiling water so that a mush is formed. The Umbundu name for this preparation is *iputa riatombo*, meaning "mush of manioc." The leaves of *olungunga* are not soaked in water; on the contrary, they may be cooked as soon as they are gathered, but they must not be eaten when warm. There is no danger in eating them after they have been boiled and have been allowed to become cold. The leaves are served with salt or fat.

All the manioc, with the exception of *olungunga*, is sweet. *Kandona* has roots which may be eaten uncooked, but both leaves and roots are sometimes cooked in water. Other varieties of manioc known as *otetu*, *elemba*, and *esela* are eaten in the same way as *kandona*. Manioc is in use all the year, but the greatest quantity is consumed in November and December, a period when the growing corn is not ripe and the storage supplies have dwindled.

Sweet potatoes are plentiful all the year with the exception of the months of November and December. They are placed in the pot, without removal of the skin, and boiled for a period of twenty or thirty minutes. They are taken out, peeled, and eaten. European potatoes are sometimes peeled and made into a mush. The variety of garden produce naturally depends on proximity to a trading post, a mission, or some other European settlement.

In propagating manioc a stem is cut off from the parent plant which is about three feet high; but probably two or three years pass before the tubers are considered large enough for use. Sweet potatoes are planted in January, but there is very little of this food available in February and March. Toward the end of March or early in April a few potatoes may be ready for consumption.

Peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*, Leguminosae) are planted in October by women who prepare patches of ground which are drilled with holes one inch deep and eight inches apart. One nut is placed in each hole after the shell has been removed. Above the ground small leaves appear. After the flower-stalk withers it has the peculiarity of elongating and bending down. In this way the young pod is forced underground, and the seeds mature a little way below the surface.

Some natives employ irrigation by leading small channels of water from a hillside stream to a garden containing maize and

436 804 Balls of wax and tobacco were, and are now, definite standar of trade. To some extent rubber as a medium of exchange has be used through contact with eastern Angola. The Umbundu wo *ocilila* expresses a weight of about thirty kilos.

805 221 There is no measure for minutes or hours. I have seen a ma of the Luchazi tribe keep account of the number of days taken on journey by cutting notches on a stick. Ngonga says that the Ovim bundu reckon by cutting notches, also by knotting a piece of strin Three days would be expressed by the words *akumbi atatu* ("thre suns"). The word day or sun is used in fixing a time. There is n word for week. A month is *ossi*, which is the word for moon. Whe the corn is ripe the people say, "We are in a new year." Anothe yearly time mark is the arrival of the first rains, probably in th middle of September.

The words *oku lima* ("to cultivate") yield the word *ulima*, whic designates the period between the beginnings of two rainy seasons Corn is planted about the time of the first heavy rains, which occu in late September or early October. Naturally, this important occa sion forms a somewhat uncertain time base; nevertheless it is th one used to express the lapse of years up to five in number. Afte such a period the estimation of time is unreliable.

INDUSTRIES

IRON-WORK

326 Among occupations of primary importance is that of the black- smith (*ocirisalo*). Owing to the increasing importation of hoe blades and other iron goods, together with the facilities for collecting scrap iron, the winning and smelting of iron is increasingly rare. There are probably very few places where the old type of conical clay furnace now exists. Almost any fragments of iron are melted at the forge where a box is kept to hold nails, hoop iron from packing cases, and other fragments resulting from proximity to a European culture.

Nothing is mixed with the iron, neither is there any casting in molds. The only process is the forging of red-hot iron. The Ovim- bundu do not draw iron wire, although they know of the process which is practised by the Vachokwe.

The work of the blacksmith was studied at the village of Njongolo in Elende. The men were for a time reticent respecting the nature of their training and the ceremony of initiation, but the chief of the village helped considerably by persuading the men to speak freely.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

CHAPTER V

VILLAGE ECONOMICS

The homeland of the Ovimbundu, the Benguela Highland, is mostly over 4,000 feet above sea-level. Rainfall is 50–60 inches a year, and the rainy season is from September to April.[1] In this season after a downpour there is frequently a cooling of the air, and the most intense heat comes just before the rainy season, during the dry spell that occurs in or about February, and just after the rains. Between the middle of May and the middle of July the nights and early mornings are bitterly cold but the days are pleasantly cool. After the middle of July the temperature gradually rises.

The soil of the Highland is poor; the Ovimbundu industriously cultivate beans, manioc, maize, potatoes, and tobacco. Less frequently they have coffee plants, fruit trees, and sisal. Occasionally wheat is grown but the ground is not really suitable. I am told that rice could be grown in the stream valleys. Four field types are recognized by the Ovimbundu—*otjumbo* (garden), *onaka* (stream-valley garden), *embanda* (in ground sloping up from a stream), and *ohya* (a field away from the streams on level ground).[2]

Umbundu country is well supplied with water in streams and rivers, and the Ovimbundu have built irrigation channels wherever possible. Cultivation in the stream valleys, that is, of the *onaka* type of garden, has only been practised since the 1870's or 80's.[3] They are planted in August or the beginning of September, and give crops in December and January. The

[1] For an excellent account of Umbundu habitat see Childs, pp. 1–11.

[2] Alfredo Alves, *Dicionário Etimológico Bundo-Português*, Lisbon, 1951, Vol. I, p. 659 gives *embanda* as a synonym of *onaka*.

[3] Private information.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

maize from these beds is for home consumption, and it comes at a time when maize supplies are running low, and some people have to rely on manioc. The *ombanda* type is sown in September and early October. Then the main fields (*ovaɲa*, plural of *eɲa*) are sown in October and November, and only after this is maize sown in the gardens round the houses. In December and January the people are busy hoeing the fields and in February the sowing of beans takes place, continuing into March. This is followed by the harvesting of the gardens in the village, and by the gathering of the maize in the fields, the maize then being placed in field huts to dry. This takes place in March and April, and with its ending the dry season has come.

The dry season is the time for travelling to see relatives and for getting married, since the burden of work is much reduced. May is a good time to clear the bush and then and in later months there is time to build houses. During the dry season there was much more chance of finding people at home, and there were far more festive occasions. This is also a time when men and women can practise crafts such as basketry, fish-trap making, pottery, and so on. In July, the maize dried in the field hut is pounded and brought back to the village, whence it is taken to the traders for sale. The pounding and carrying is often the work of parties of friends and relatives who are rewarded with beer. Occasionally somebody's maize is collected like this well into September, but most people finish in August. By August the grass has grown very high, and the firing of it is the beginning of large-scale hunts in which men and boys from several villages may join together. Hunts may be undertaken by individuals or by groups at other times of the year either as a hobby or to kill a destructive wild pig (in which case the hunt will be undertaken by a group of people). September is a good month for fishing. The fire has cleared the stream valleys which can now be sown, thus starting off the year's cycle again.

There is no shortage of land, and hence questions of land rights seldom come up in social relations. A village headman has no rights over land outside his village, and even within a village there are strips of bush from which a new garden can be cut. Land is very occasionally sold. For instance a man return-